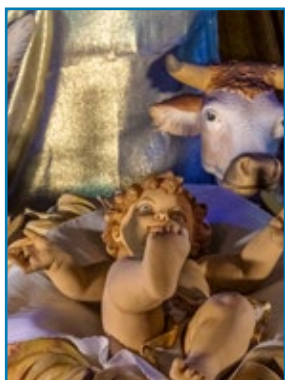


# **A** News of the **A**ssumption



## **EDITORIAL**

### **Christmas 2020...**

**Let's give thanks for the 175th anniversary of the foundation of the Augustinians of the Assumption**

# Agenda

## Plenary General Council

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- n° 8 : **June 1-11, 2021.**

## Ordinary General Councils

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- n° 26 : **February 1-5, 2021.**
- n° 27 : **March 22-26, 2021.**
- n° 28 : **May 10-14, 2021.**
- n° 29 : **June 14, 2021.**
- n° 30 : **September 6-24, 2021.**



### On the cover

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The 175th jubilee of the foundation of our Congregation has illicited an unparalleled artistic creativity. It inspired two young religious to create new depictions of Fr. Emmanuel d'Alzon, and even of the first brothers who joined him: read their stories on pages 8-9.

On the first page, the first professed Assumptionists, by Br. Jean-Thomas de La Roche Saint-André: from left to right, Etienne Pernet (1824-1899), Henri Brun (1821-1895), Victor Cardenne (1821-1851), Hippolyte Saugrain (1822-1905) and Fr. Emmanuel d'Alzon.

## A prayer of Fr. d'Alzon on vocation

This prayer, published on the site [catholique.fr](http://catholique.fr), is a compilation of excerpts from several documents: see the footnotes for sources.

«Oh my God, give me the light, so that I might see what I am missing; the strength, to acquire the virtues that I do not have. Give me the Grace to follow my vocation, so that, as a true son of the Church and of the Blessed Virgin, I may not be too unworthy an imitator of the virtues of Jesus, my Master.<sup>1</sup>

Lord, give me great purity in my intentions, and much energy to put them into practice. Let me see all that I have to do and give me the courage to realize it. What you ask may be difficult, but it doesn't matter, as long as I reach my true end which is none other than You.<sup>2</sup>

Give me, oh, my God, in the position in which you have placed me, the Grace to be thoroughly convinced that everything is meaningless, except for one thing. Give me the Grace to want no other means than that which You have placed in my hands to accomplish my task, persuaded, that I must be the instrument You have given me, that is the most suitable to do well the work You have commanded of me.<sup>3</sup>

Oh, Divine Model! The Christian, the priest, the religious should imitate You, each in varying degrees, but that is the work. Lord, that will be the task of my whole life, provided that You let my heart hear this Word that so few understand, and yet is so full of love: «Follow me».<sup>4</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Directoire, chap. 23 : « De la vie intérieure ». *Ecrits spirituels*, p. 123.

<sup>2</sup> 8<sup>e</sup> méditation de la pureté d'intention. *Ecrits spirituels*, p. 378-379.

<sup>3</sup> Retraite à Saint-Eusèbe. *Ecrits spirituels*, p. 760-761.

<sup>4</sup> *Méditations sur la perfection religieuse pour les Augustins de l'Assomption*, Paris, 1927, II, p. 280.

# Christmas 2020

## Giving thanks for the 175th anniversary of the foundation of the Augustinians of the Assumption

The Savior is born, a son is given to us! The song of angels and the clamor of shepherds overwhelm us with the simple joy of those who love with a child's heart. With this celebration of the Nativity of 2020, we close the jubilee of the 175th anniversary of the founding of the Augustinians of the Assumption. An anniversary marked by the COVID-19 pandemic, but also by the signs of God's tenderness through the concrete solidarities we have been able to build.

and a people are fruitful only if they know how to open themselves creatively to others. "(#41) Emmanuel d'Alzon was a man who knew how to open himself to others. He didn't stay in his castle, he knew how to leave his land, he took the road to the Kingdom of God and tried the adventure of following Jesus Christ. Today, will we be as bold as he was?

Brothers and sisters, the Nativity gives us to contemplate a mystery of humility, the humble beginning of the manger in Bethlehem. We too are called to the grace of beginnings. A jubilee is not meant to contemplate the past; it is there to open the future for us. May the spirit of Christmas invade your hearts, may God's blessing be upon you all. Merry Christmas! ■

Emmanuel d'Alzon was the descendant of an aristocratic family. The family was small. But by choosing religious life, he showed his desire to be surrounded by a multitude of brothers and sisters in Christ. Today we are the members of this family where we are all brothers. Pope Francis reminds us in Fratelli tutti "that a person



**Fr. Benoît Grière**  
Superior General  
of the  
Augustinians of  
the Assumption



# Calls, nominations, changes..

Fr. Benoît Grière, Superior General, with the consent of his Council, has called:

## ■ to PERPETUAL PROFESSION

- 1) **ANDRIANANTENAINA Emilson Laurent**  
(Andean Province) (10/27/2020)
- 2) **RUIZ RIVERA Jonathan Esteban**  
(Andean Province) (12/15/2020)
- 3) **DE OLIVEIRA MARQUES Jefferson**  
(Andean Province) (12/15/2020)
- 4) **MUSAFIRI MUHITSYA Jean-Christian**  
(Africa) (12/15/2020)
- 5) **NKOY BAKOLANA André-Teddy**  
(Africa) (12/16/2020)

## ■ to the DIACONATE

- 6) **NGUYỄN HỮU Thái Antoine**  
(Europe) (10/28/2020)
- 7) **SANTIAGO MARTÍNEZ Irvin**  
(Andean Province) (12/16/2020)
- 8) **PALUKU WAYOMEKA Faustin Maurille**  
(Andean Province) (12/16/2020)

## ■ to the PRIESTHOOD

- 9) **GONZALEZ FLORES Eddy**  
(Europe) (10/27/2020)
- 10) **KOMABOU Renaud Assou Komlan**  
(Europe) (10/28/2020)
- 11) **RANDRIANANDRASANA William Johnes**  
(Madagascar) (10/28/2020)
- 12) **KAMBALE SYALEMBA Evariste**  
(Africa) (12/17/2020)
- 13) **GATUNA Peter**  
(East Africa) (12/17/2020)
- 14) **VU VAN Hue Charles**  
(Europe) (12/17/2020)

## OPENING OF HOUSES

Fr. Benoît Grière, Superior General, with the consent of his Council, has given his approval for:

- the **opening of a community**, of an apostolic nature, at **Tsimijaly**, in the diocese of Port-Bergé (Madagascar) ;
- the **opening of a community** to welcome migrants and for a vocational ministry, in **El Paso, TX** (United States, North American Province).



## AGREEMENT OF FORMATORS

Fr. Benoît Grière, Superior General, with the consent of his Plenary General Council, has given his approval for the nomination of:

- Fr. **Nicolas TARRALLE** as Superior of CIFA of Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso, Province of Europe), for a 2nd mandate ;
- Fr. **Joseph MBUSA KATUSI** as Superior of CIFA of Kinshasa (D-R Congo, Province of Africa).

## DEPARTURE FROM THE INSTITUTE

The Superior General, with the consent of his Council, has granted an indult to leave the Congregation to Br. **Antoine-Marie COMBEY-ADAMAH** (Europe), October 28, 2020.

# Fr. Benoît Grière: “We are passionate about the Kingdom!”

At the conclusion of the jubilee year of the 175th anniversary of our foundation, Father General shared with the entire Congregation a message by video (1), of which the following are the main excerpts.

“Dear brothers and sisters,

I am in Rome at the beginning of December 2020 when, with the members of my General Council, we should have been in Nîmes, France, to participate in various events and celebrations in honor of the 175th anniversary of the founding of our family of the Augustinians of the Assumption. Unfortunately, as you know, since the beginning of this year 2020, we have been caught up in a pandemic, the Covid 19 or coronavirus, which has invaded the whole world, forcing everyone to disrupt their programs and projects. I cannot ignore our sick brothers and those who have left, affected by this dreadful disease. This epidemic has affected all of us, and we are today weakened. Our parishes are experiencing many difficulties, our works like Bayard and our reception centers have been deeply affected in their activities. We hope that the vaccine will allow us to return to a certain normality. But we will have to learn from what we have experienced in order to act better and more deeply in our mission for the Kingdom of God. Indeed it is about the Kingdom of God that I want to speak with you for a few moments.

## The jubilee of our 175th anniversary

To celebrate a jubilee is to



Fr. Benoît Grière, Superior General, delivering his video message broadcast on December 18, 2020.

recognize oneself as the full heirs of a tradition, of a charism, of a very rich patrimony: that of the Augustinians of the Assumption, lived in the great Assumptionist family. In 1980, when we were celebrating the centennial of the death of our beloved founder, Cardinal Marty said that we were heirs, but that we must also be founders. Today, 175 years after our foundation on December 25, 1845, we still have this ambition to pursue the original intuition of Emmanuel d’Alzon. The charism is alive and continues to develop. Religious and lay members of the Alliance, we are its custodians, not as a treasure that we want

to hide, but as a treasure that we want to bring to fruition. We have received much, and much will be asked of us. What have we done with this rare pearl bequeathed to us by Fr. Emmanuel d’Alzon?

On this 175th anniversary, we can be happy to see that the charism continues to spread: young shoots are appearing throughout the world, preferably but not only in Africa and Asia, lands of rich and generous promise. The mission is difficult. We must not believe that we arrive “the flower with the gun” and that everything is acquired: we must work, work hard, and I thank the founders,

all those who have contributed in one way or another to implant our charism in these lands.

But God always calls men and women to follow him to the Assumption! God is calling in Europe as well as in North and South America. I am not forgetting that we currently have a few vocations in our “old” Europe; young people are joining us, even through social networks or web sites. We must be attentive to accompany these vocations. The biggest sin that we can commit with regard to pastoral work for vocations is indifference (leaving letters unanswered, requests without support) and negligence, forgetting that we are God’s relays, who needs people to continue the proclamation of the Gospel.

Vocations are also lay people. The Lay-Religious Alliance is a priority of our action. We are collaborators, partners in a covenant that is made with God. The laity of the Alliance, everywhere in the world, is there to support the religious and encourage them to be more authentic. And the religious are there to support the laity in their mission at the heart of the world. It is together that we are workers of the Kingdom. Let us not forget that we are all responsible for spreading this good news: we are a fraternal community, which is already a sign of the Kingdom.

### - A time of foundations

The charism is still alive, it seeks to establish itself in new territories. This jubilee year should have seen the birth of a community in Angola, under the aegis of the Provinces of Brazil and Africa, at the end of four

**« But we must not abandon the Church: we must love her, so that she may live a profound conversion. »**

years of prospecting: in this Portuguese-speaking country, south of the DR-Congo, the Bishop of Benguela has assigned us a parish. A missionary team of Brazilians and Congolese is ready to go there, but we are waiting for the health barriers to open.

The Jubilee Year will also see the foundation of a missionary center in El Paso (USA): this city in Texas is experiencing a large influx of migrants from nearby Mexico. A community, also international (United States, Philippines, Mexico), will take charge of a shrine and the pastoral care of migration: it is a sign of universal fraternity, which we want to live at the Assumption as a sign of the Kingdom of God.

Other foundations are being considered, but not yet clearly programmed. In Ghana, an English-speaking country in West Africa, we have the ambition to develop the Bayard Africa press center. In Ivory Coast, we hope to have a place of theological training in this part of the continent. In Asia, we are looking towards India and China, but it is

likely that the next foundation will be in Indonesia, this large archipelago with a strong Muslim majority but with an active and living Christian minority from where we already receive vocations.

The reality of the Assumption is resolutely missionary and apostolic. We are workers of the Kingdom. We want to work for the coming of the Reign of God: that is our main orientation.

### The next General Chapter

Here we are soon in 2021, the year in which the countdown to our 34th General Chapter will begin - for it takes more than two years to get this heavy institutional machinery up and running. This Chapter will take place in Rome in June 2023. We have not yet defined the theme, but it will be marked by a strong delegation of young Provinces that have become quantitatively very important in the life of our Institute.

What will be the topics? Our passion for education remains a priority. It is expressed in many ways: obviously our schools and universities in many countries, because like what Emmanuel d’Alzon wanted to do at Assumption College in Nîmes, we must continue this mission that we love, even if it was for a time neglected or even abandoned in some countries. But education also takes place in the family circle, in youth movements and through the media: with Bayard, we have a magnificent gateway into the world of youth. Let us be careful not to confine education to teaching because, being missionaries, we are educators. The Gospel thus passes for a large part through education by

accompanying the young people of our societies.

For the Assumption, the media remains an important work. We have sprouted outside of Europe, with a rather vigorous North American pole, then a presence in Africa and Asia: this may still seem modest compared to the reality of the group in Europe, but these shoots are beginning to take hold in the social and religious landscape in Vietnam, the Philippines and West Africa. Our presence in the media must be rethought in the context of such internationalization, but also in the new territories of the e-continent: the Web and digital productions, where the Assumption must be present. I thank the initiatives taken, for example “e-pilgrimages” to allow, in this crisis of the Covid, to visit places like Rome from a distance or to make a pilgrimage to Lourdes without leaving one’s home.

The perspectives of the Chapter will also include all that concerns justice, peace and the integrity of creation: our Earth is in a bad shape, pollution in all its forms and the senseless exploitation of resources contribute to the fragility of our environment. We must move resolutely towards new ways of life, move towards happy frugality, better regulate our needs to keep this earth that welcomes us, allows us to live and be happy.

**May your Kingdom come**

This next Chapter is not written in advance. We must give way to the Spirit who must blow, and who always surprises us! We will therefore prepare this Chapter, not to channel it, but to be attentive to the signs of the Spirit, being particularly aware of our presence among

young people. Let us not hide it: our world is less and less Christian, and sometimes hostile to the Christian faith, but it is the world where we are and which we must love, helping it to receive the freshness of the Good News of Jesus Christ.

We are passionate about the Kingdom! This is what I would like us to remember on this 175th anniversary of our foundation. We are here to spread the Good News of salvation, the love that the Father has given us in Jesus Christ and this presence that continues through the gift of the Holy Spirit.

When Fr. d’Alzon chose this call of the Our Father, “Thy Kingdom come,” he summed up the heart of Assumptionist spirituality: a call to make the Reign of God total, in our hearts and in our actions in the world. And when I say that we are passionate about the Kingdom, I mean both religious and lay people. Let us not be timid and lukewarm: an anniversary is not about congratulations, thanks, celebrations where we evoke the past... It is about opening the future, and I know that I can count on each one of you, lay or religious, to continue this adventure of the Kingdom. For this passion for the Kingdom is also lived by the laity who have a family and manifest through their commitment (within the Christian community, within their couple) this love that God has for each one.

I insist on the love of the Church: we must love our Church all the more since it is today subject to a serious crisis which, on the one hand, rests on our responsibility. Indeed, the crisis of abuse could never have occurred if we had been careful to avoid abuses. Our silences

are sometimes guilty, our eyes are sometimes blind... Today, the light is shining, and we are discovering things that are probably difficult to accept. But we must not abandon the Church: we must love her, so that she may live a profound conversion. The Church is us, each one of us, and it is we who must live her conversion so that the Church may become holy and blameless.

We must be available for evangelization. The congregation invests an enormous amount of time, money and people in the formation of young religious. Here I am launching an appeal to mobilize ourselves even more and better to form the religious, but also the laity who join us. The Assumption needs well-formed men and women who are well prepared to announce the Reign of God in the world.

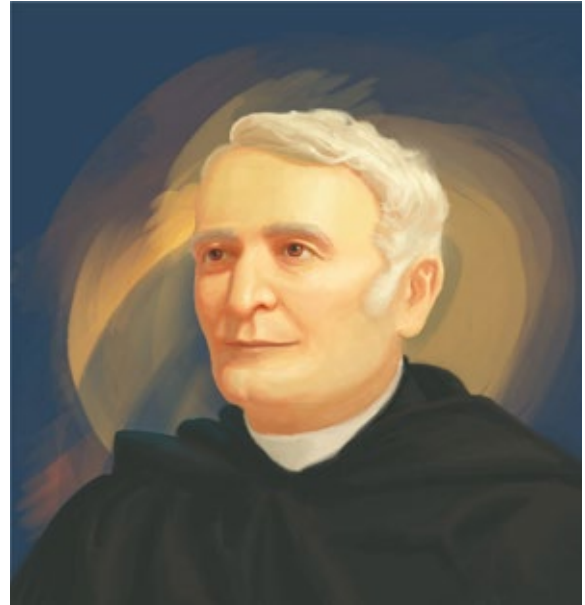
Dear brothers and sisters, this conference will be put online on December 18, and on December 19 there will be a celebration in the Province of Europe at Notre-Dame des Victoires, the place where Fr. d’Alzon made his religious commitment privately. I will be associated with all my Assumption brothers throughout the world at this celebration; we will be praying especially that each one of us will become more and more passionate about the Adveniat Regnum tuum: Thy kingdom come!

**P. Benoît GRIÈRE**  
General Superior

1) The video of this message can be found on the link: <https://youtu.be/ij2XAGovgWM>

## Unexpected faces of Fr. d'Alzon

The 175th anniversary of the foundation of our Congregation gave the same idea to two young religious artists: to rejuvenate the image of our Founder through historical portraits. The FF. Jean-Thomas de La Roche Saint-André (Europe) and Blair Nuyda (North America) explain.



### Br. Jean-Thomas de La Roche Saint-André : “Something of the passion for the Kingdom”.

#### How did you come up with the idea of these “updated” portraits of our founder?

First of all, the Provincial mentioned the interest of making a new portrait of Father d’Alzon during the local chapter of my community last year. Then Brother Robert Migliorini asked me to do a young portrait, an older portrait, and a portrait of the first five religious of the congregation.

#### What were your sources of inspiration?

I tried to base myself on period photos, but it was not easy because I had only a few photos at my disposal, of very low resolution, in black and white. So I had to extrapolate for color,

details, and even more when I had to change the age.

For the group portrait, I had to decide where the light was coming from, so I had to imagine from photos with different light conditions what it would look like when I changed the light. To do this I had to call upon all that I had learned about the different properties of light interacting with the skin, as well as the three-dimensionality of a face.

#### What image of our founder, but also of our congregation, do you wish to communicate in this way?

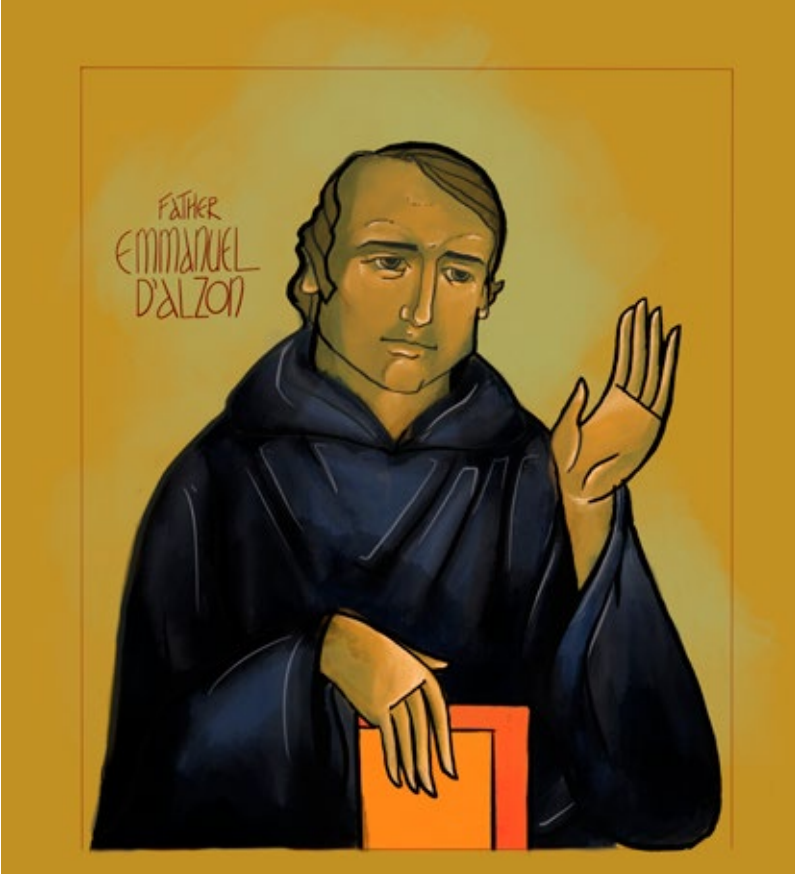
It depends on each portrait. For the young Fr. d’Alzon, with

very warm colors, I try to express something of the passion for the Kingdom that burns in his heart.

For the one where he is older, I wanted to show, through the contrast between cold and warm colors, an aspect that is still combative despite his old age.

Finally, for the portrait with the first brothers, I try to express something of the memory of the past, with a main light on the side that can evoke a setting sun, and an almost monochromatic palette. I also wanted to show the community aspect through their expressions: that they look happy to be together.





## Br. Blair Nuyda : « Openness to God's will »

### How did you come up with the idea of creating this “updated” portrait of our founder ?

It comes out of a necessity. We always need to make the legacy and vision of our Founder alive. Reading and reflecting on his writings play a large part for that. But there is also a need to reinforce this with the power of visual images. The Founder's black-and-white photos have become all too familiar to us by now : I thought perhaps that it might be good to have a fresh and colorful image of Father d'Alzon but still fairly traditional enough to allow a good representation of the Founder's recognizable features.

As an illustrator and a budding iconographer, I have been heavily influenced by Byzantine and Romanesque styles. As I began to work on this visual translation, I realized that I needed to do more research and my work will have to necessarily build on tradition. It is my hope that my work will simply be a contribution to a continuing tradition of Assumptionist art.

### What were your sources of inspiration ?

Among the photos of Father d'Alzon I chose ones that captured not only his physical features but also his temperament and passion. I also had the valuable help of a book by Fr. Jean-Paul Perier-Muzet and Fr. Jean Daniel Gullung entitled *Le Père d'Alzon en images* to see how other artists made visual interpretations of Fr. d'Alzon.

Two years ago, leading a pilgrimage to Assisi, I saw up close how Giotto made use of colorful images to depict the life of Saint Francis. Then in Florence, I gazed at the *Life of Saint Francis* in Santa Croce. These masterpieces were breathtaking and worthy monuments to such a great saint. I thought that the life of Father d'Alzon, humble man that he was, also merits visual interpretation, in a similar but modest way. I also had the chance to see the beautiful portrait of an older Father d'Alzon, rendered in a Byzantine iconographic style, that

can be found in our Emperatriz Parish in Mexico City.

The portrait of d'Alzon that you see now is still a work in progress. It is simply a first concrete step if I were to do my version of the *Life of Emmanuel d'Alzon*. I had to start with a central portrait of Fr. d'Alzon in his mid-life and work backward for his younger years and forward for his later years.

### What image of our founder, but also of our congregation, do you wish to communicate ?

The portrait makes use of traditional iconographic symbols and gestures, patterned after an actual photo of d'Alzon seated with a book standing on his lap. The gesture of his right hand raised can be seen in different ways: a teaching gesture, an oblation of praise, or openness to God's will. Our Founder had his fragilities but had always sought to discern and follow God's plans for him and for the extension of God's Kingdom. I hope to communicate this through the other panels once the project is complete.

But the project is just as important as the process. I want this project to be a collaborative one. I am still looking for interested people who can share ideas with me. The small group of our Lay-Religious Alliance has been meeting monthly to discuss and reflect on each turning point in Fr. d'Alzon's life. Their input, to some extent, helps me to visualize what is possible for each panel in the project. Let me then make this invitation-- to anyone who would like to contribute in any way or form to this project, please contact me by email at: [blair.nuyda@gmail.com](mailto:blair.nuyda@gmail.com). Someday, perhaps during an upcoming gathering in Nîmes or another Jubilee, the project will be complete.

## Closing of the jubilee at Notre-Dame des Victoires



It was in this church in Paris that Fr. Emmanuel d'Alzon pronounced private religious vows in the summer of 1845, his first commitment to the religious family he would found six months later. It was there, very naturally, that the Province of Europe also wanted to celebrate the end of our jubilee year: it was on December 19, during a Eucharist presided over by Bishop Philippe Marsset, Auxiliary Bishop of Paris and friend of the Assumption. In spite of the restrictions imposed by the health crisis, it was an intense moment of thanksgiving, in communion with the entire Congregation.

On the occasion of this jubilee year, the Province of Europe also produced a video briefly presenting the Congregation:

<https://www.facebook.com/assomptionnistesprovincedeurope/videos/760897997836398/>



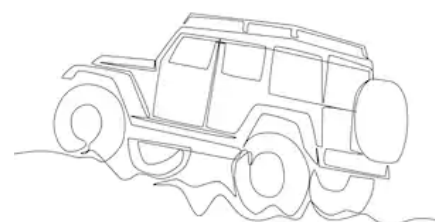
## The 2021 Solidarity Campaign

As it does every year, the CGP proposes to the entire Congregation to support an Assumptionist community or work in need of financing, including through our Office of Solidarity and Development (BDS). For 2021, the chosen project is the acquisition of a second-hand 4x4 vehicle for the postulancy “Blessed Kamen” in Kattendere (DR-Congo, Province of Africa), where about twenty candidates for our religious life are welcomed.

This purchase is justified by the deplorable state of the roads to the postulancy and the need to replace the current vehicle, which is out of breath.

All the communities of the Congregation, as well as our works and the lay groups of the Assumption, are therefore invited to contribute to this project, each one to its own measure, knowing that the community needs \$10,000 out of a total cost of \$16,000.

For the methods of payment (in USD or Euros): ask at the General Commissary in Rome.



# Assumption, always a founder

During its 7th session, held by videoconference in December, the General Council Plenary validated the creation of two new communities, in Texas (United States) and in Madagascar



**Frs. Ron Sibugan and Peter Precourt in front of the sanctuary for refugees entrusted to them in El Paso.**

At its last Provincial Chapter of implementation, the Province of North America decided to begin a new Provincial foundation to serve the poor. Our commitment was to have a community closer to the border between the United States and Mexico. It would be a joint effort between the United States and the Mexican Region of the Province.

The initial search for the location of this new community was to look in the Southwestern part of the United States. It was agreed that the community would be comprised of four members: two from Mexico and two from

the United States. The individuals initially assigned to this community were: Fr. Peter Precourt and Fr. Ronald Sibugan from the USA, and Fr. Marciano Lopez Solis and Fr. Fataki Kakule from Mexico. Fr. Fataki later returned to Africa and his replacement is yet to be named.

A committee was formed to study the various possibilities. A team of two religious, Fr. John Franck and Fr. Ronald Sibugan, was sent to make some visits and report back to the Province. The report indicated that the diocese of El Paso in Texas would offer us a variety of opportunities and

that the Bishop would be most welcoming. It was decided that this would be the location that we would further explore. As a result of that decision, we would need someone to spend more time in El Paso. Fr. Peter Precourt was sent in January of 2020 to live in El Paso. Fr. Peter took up residence at the diocesan center in their senior housing.

The initial investigations by Fr. Peter were among the various groups of religious involved with immigration and migration in the borderlands. It was during these visits that the pandemic arrived in Texas and caused everything to

come to a halt. There was, however, an opportunity during this break to spend more time with the Bishop and work on possibilities for the Province to establish a presence in the Diocese. Knowing of our desire to work with the poor, immigrants and migrants, the Bishop offered us a possibility of serving in a very poor parish situated at the very entrance of the bridge to Mexico. The parish of St. Francis Xavier is surrounded by a series of highways which lead to the Bridge of America that connects the United States to the city of Juarez, Mexico. Most of the residential areas around the parish disappeared with the construction of the highways. There remains among the displaced parishioners a sense of attachment to the parish. They still see the importance of St. Francis Xavier in their life and visit periodically, like returning to a shrine.

In July of 2020, both Fr. Ronald and Fr. Marciano were scheduled to arrive in El Paso to join Fr. Peter and begin their life together in community. Unfortunately, Fr. Marciano was not able to arrive due to visa difficulties and the pandemic. His arrival is anticipated in the early 2021. Fr. Ronald arrived and lived with Fr. Peter until their move to the Parish.

Life began for us in the parish on September 18, 2020. We have not yet fully functioned as a parish community, because of the pandemic cases in El Paso and the restrictions that have been imposed on gatherings.

Looking out from our residence at the parish, we are able to see Mexico. Daily we watch people crossing from both the USA and Mexico. Currently there are no immigrants or migrants able to cross to the USA because of the administration's "Stay in Mexi-

co" orders and the pandemic. We do know that in the past this parish played a role in assisting new arrivals who would see the parish steeple as they crossed over the bridge.

It is the Bishop's hope that we would become a shrine for immigrants and migrants. It is our intention to cooperate with other religious groups and the diocese who work with immigrants and migrants once the border reopens. We look forward to building a very active outreach to the neighborhood which is poor and in need of support.

The physical structures of the parish complex are old and in need of repair. It is a reminder for us of what it means to live among the poor. We have slowly made it into a community home and look forward to visits once the pandemic restrictions are lifted.

It is our intention that we will expose the plight of immigrants and migrants to our broader Assumption family. We have already begun discussions with our University Campus Ministry at Worcester and with our other parishes. We believe that an immersion experience would help educate our brothers and sisters in the Assumption. We look forward to collaboration with our Lay Assumptionists here and abroad. We have begun a webpage and Facebook page for the parish, which we hope will help us share our work here in El Paso (1). We ask for your prayers as we begin this new work.

**Fr. Peter PRECOURT**  
(El Paso, Texas)

1) <https://www.stfrancisxaviercatholicchurch.com/>  
<https://www.facebook.com/stfrancisxaviercatholicchurchofelpaso>

## Madagascar is going to found in Port-Bergé

Another foundation was validated by the CGP last December: the one proposed by the Province of Madagascar at Tsimijaly, in the Diocese of Port-Bergé. In order to expand its locations beyond the dioceses of Tuléar, its place of foundation, Antananarivo and Fianarantsoa, its places of formation, this Province, which regularly recruits vocations, is going to establish itself in a region of first evangelization, in the northwest of the Big Island.

It is the Diocese of Port-Bergé, whose population is overwhelmingly Muslim, with only 3% Christian and a presbyterium that is still small, that will welcome the future community. This community, established in Tsimijaly, will put four religious at the service of a pastoral sector, with also the animation of schools and colleges, as well as a pilgrimage perspective. It is planned to invest in crops and livestock for food self-sufficiency and rural promotion.



# A New Chapel for the Novitiate of Ba Ria

The Vietnamese Assumptionists were celebrating, at the end of September, because the first vows of the local newly professed were pronounced in the new chapel of the novitiate



The new chapel (left) and the new religious surrounding the Bishop of Ba Ria on August 21 (right).

**O**n August 21, 2020, at 9:30, the community of the Novitiate of the Augustinians of the Assumption in Ba Ria, Vietnam, experienced two important events: the celebration of the first religious profession of five novices, and the benediction of the community's new chapel. This remarkable double event was presided by Msgr. Emmanuel Nguyen Hong Son, bishop of the diocese of Ba Ria. It was concelebrated by the superior of the Vicariate of Asia-Oceania, the superior of the scholasticate of Saigon-Fatima, the master of novices and the pastor of the parish Lang Cat. The ceremony began with the blessing of the new chapel. It was a huge grace for the community, which after much work,

finally had a worthy edifice consecrated to the Lord.

## A celebration experienced in simplicity

Unlike previous years, the celebration of the first religious profession of that year, took place in an atmosphere that was somber and simple. Approximately thirty people were in attendance and these were mostly Assumptionist brothers. This simplicity demonstrated a sacrifice on the part of the novices, who were missing the physical presence of their families. However, it was a beautiful occasion for them to put aside outside concerns so as to prepare interiorly before committing themselves to the congregation.

In his homily, Msgr. Emmanuel used the figure of Samuel to illustrate the mysterious call of God for each of the novices and the necessity for each one of them to respond to this divine call with generosity, humility and obedience in each moment of their religious lives. The celebration concluded with words of thanks from the five new Assumptionist religious. They expressed their sincere gratitude toward Msgr. Emmanuel, the priest-concelebrants, the formators of the congregation, and especially their parents who were in union, in spirit, with them.

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## In the footsteps of the Assumptionist habit

What are the origins and successive versions of our religious habit? Michel Derache, who now assists Fr. Patrick Zago in the archives of the Province of Europe, conducted the investigation.

On October 15, the general assembly of the Association of Archivists of the Church of France was held. Since it was held by individual or group video-conference, I participated in a group meeting at the Jesuit house in the suburbs of Paris, with about fifteen Congregations represented. We were asked to make a brief presentation of a few minutes on the evolution of the religious habit, with the presentation of photos if possible or objects... Thus the Sisters of Saint Vincent de Paul presented the cornet that we see in many films, including those of Louis de Funès!

For my part, with the help of Fr. Patrick Zago who gave me some references, I was able to say something about our own habit. First of all, on the photos we have of our founder, we can see that he wore the cowl of the Hermits of St. Augustine. On March 4, 1884, Fr. François Picard wrote: "I asked that all the variegation in the costume be stopped. In order to establish a perfect uniformity, I asked Father Germer to mention in the "Memories" all the details of the Augustinian habit in Rome. »

In fact, in No. 30 of the publication *Souvenirs*, dated March 8, 1884, we read (p. 154): "The costume of the Order of St. Augustine, following the privilege granted to us [in 1881 by the Order of the Hermits of St. Au-



Fr. d'Alzon, dressed in the habit he had chosen for his congregation.



In some hot countries of Africa and Asia (here in the Philippines), the habit is worn in white.

gustine], is definitively adopted. “The details on the fabric (of “medium quality black serge”), the sleeves, the pockets, the belt (it “hangs on the left side, in front”) follow; as for the cowl, it “must be long enough from the front to reach the belt without covering it, it goes down from the arms to end in a straight point at the back”.

Later, during the vicariate of Fr. Maubon, the secretary of the Sacred Congregation of Religious, Bishop La Puma, communicated the decisions taken to the Procurator Fr. Baudouy, on 14 January 1921: “The habit is to be differentiated from that of the Hermits of Saint Augustine...”. Hence the decision to have the cowl rounded, instead of being pointed. This will be recapitulated in the 1923 Constitutions: “Our Congregation is composed of Religious of choir and lay Brothers. They wear a black serge dress with the leather belt of Our Lady of Consolation and the round cowl of the same color with the hood” (n. 6). After

the Second World War, however, there was a revival of the pointed cowl.

Finally, the history of our habit can be summarized in three dates: cowl en pointe in 1884, rounded in 1921 and again en pointe in 1945-46! But a 4th date will follow, since in 1963 will be decided the adoption of the clergyman costume, itself gradually abandoned around 1968 for a civil dress which then became generalized de facto.

To find a new precision, we have to wait until 1984 and the publication of the Rule of Life still in force today. This Rule states, in n. 151: “Our religious habit, a sign of consecration and a witness to poverty, is, by tradition, that of the Order of St. Augustine. For its use we conform to the provisions of universal law. ». One could not be more sober!

A final interesting clue can be found in the official photos of our curia, general or provincial. Thus, in 2011 as in 2017, the official photo of the newly elected General Curia shows Fr. Benoît

Grière and his council all as clergyman, except for Brother Didier Remiot (lay religious).

On the other hand, in 2017, on the photo of the new provincial team of Europe, Fr. Benoît Bigard and his assistants all wear a “half habit”, like the one worn by religious from the United States since the 1990s, as kindly confirmed to me by Fathers Richard Lamoureux and John Franck. Roland Guilmain, our brothers in Worcester wanted to wear a sign to remind themselves of their religious commitment and to make more visible the existence of an Assumptionist community on campus. Moreover, this was appropriate for non-priestly religious, who did not feel comfortable in clerical attire. In designing this half-habit, our American brothers wanted a simple sign keeping the Assumptionist or Augustinian spirit.

**P. Michel DERACHE**  
Assistant Archivist of the  
Province of Europe

## “I won’t forget this land and those who continue to live here”.



On June 28, the Church in Jerusalem greeted the departure of Fr. Gullung (here, right) through the voice of Mgr Pizzaballa, then Apostolic Administrator and since appointed Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem (left).

### The site of the Latin Patriarchy of Jerusalem received the testimony of Fr. Jean-Daniel Gullung, upon his departure after nine years at Saint-Peter in Gallicante. Below are some excerpts (1)

**I**t has been almost 50 years since I came to the Holy Land for the first time, one year after my ordination: I wanted to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, since we don't preach the same once we have seen the places where Jesus lived. Four years later, I accompanied my first group of pilgrims, and season after season, I conducted over 60 groups before being named, in 2011, rector of the sanctuary of Saint-Peter in Gallicante. It is not the same to travel here as to be in residence.

I often asked myself if I would hold up in the midst of tensions that this country was going through. I came here just before

the Yom Kippur War and I experienced the two intifadas and then the Gaza war in July-August 2014. I shared in the hopes of peace and the illusions of unsuccessful agreements, and I am leaving its inhabitants with an uncertain future. I knew that I was only here for a limited time, but I won't forget this land and those who continue to live here.

What justifies the presence of the Assumptionists on this site, is to welcome the pilgrims who come to recall an important moment on the route of the Passion. I have always been moved by the fact that the way of the cross begins with the condemnation to

death of Jesus by Pilate and that the mysteries of the rosary move from the agony of the flagellation to the crowing with thorns. Between Gethsemane and the courtroom of Pilate, there is the Palace of Caiphas, on which site is our sanctuary. Through sheets and panels, I wanted to recall that Saint Peter in Gallicante is the bearer of a message of mercy. The large mosaic in the choir of the church shows Jesus, condemned to death, who accepts the cross that came down from heaven; it evokes what Jesus said to Nicodemus: “God so loved the world, that he gave his Son to save it.” The icons in the crypt illustrate





During the First Vespers of St. Peter's, Mgr Pizzaballa leads the procession up the Holy Staircase of St. Peter's in Gallicantu.

that it was here that the apostle Peter, so sure of himself, showed his weakness through his triple denial, but also---it is that which saved him from despair---the experience of the merciful gaze of the Savior.

If there is a legacy that I leave to the pilgrims and to the local Church, it is possibly the first vespers of the feast of Saint Peter, with a pilgrimage in the steps of Jesus and Peter ascending the holy stairs that brought them to the palace of the high priest. The pilgrims regret not having access to the stairs, but if we hope to preserve them for those coming after us, it was necessary to protect them from deterioration. In 2013, archeological zones were protected by a fence and a parallel staircase was finished that allowed for a view of the site. Last year, on certain days there were as many as 3,000 pilgrims: the stairs, having been dangerous to descend, would never have withstood such a crowd.

Moreover, one day I saw a person alone in a wheelchair at the entrance of the church while her group continued on their tour. This angered me and so I had a sloping route laid out, inaugurated in 2016. In this way, handicapped individuals could go as far as the crypt and, from there, see the deep pit, see the archaeological areas and access the model of Jerusalem of the Byzantine period, as well as the belvedere. This is a realization that I am very happy about.

Like a souvenir that I cherish of Jerusalem, there is also the week of prayer for the unity of Christians. In this city, which is that of the Mother Church, the diversity of the Church is obvious. I loved that each day we went from community to community to celebrate evening prayer according to the proper liturgy of each, and that we then shared the glass of friendship - and, something unique in the world, on the evening when the service is cel-

ebrated at the Holy Sepulcher, this glass is partaken at the foot of Calvary. Isn't that wonderful?

My new mission is very different from what I was doing in the Holy Land, as I have been assigned to the community of Albertville, to assist the Superior, in the service of our elderly religious. I am glad that I still have the health to continue to offer service; and when I no longer can, I won't be sent, I will already be there!

**Fr. Jean-Daniel Gullung**

1) Testimony published by Geoffroy Poirier-Coutansais in July 2020. Complete text :

<https://www.lpj.org/fr/posts/je-noublierai-pas-cette-terre-et-ceux-qui-continueront-dy-vivre-le-p-jean-daniel-gullung-assomptionniste-dit-au-revoir-a-la-terre-sainte.html>

<https://www.lpj.org/posts/feast-of-the-holy-apostles-peter-and-paul-in-saint-peter-in-gallicantu.html>

# The miracle of La Bonne Presse (Part 4)

We are completing the publication of the document written in 1953 by T.R.P. Gervais Quenard, former Superior General of the Congregation. The rest of the history of our Maison de la Bonne Presse, like that of Bayard, remains to be written!



The stand of the Bonne Presse at the Universal Exhibition in Paris in 1937.

## V. BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER THE SECOND WAR

The reported decline had gradually required restrictive measures that would cause serious moaning in the editorial offices.

### New Leadership

Fr. Ambrose was a difficult man to replace. Father Seraphin took his place on the Board of Directors (on the recommendation of the Nunciature), and Father Ephrem<sup>1</sup> at the famous glass office. But since then, the position of the Fathers in the general administration of the House was profoundly modified. It is still today a problem that needs to be resolved discreetly and urgently.

A little later, in November 1936, Mr. Michelin<sup>2</sup>, the friend so totally devoted, was also called to the Board of Directors. Since then, he was to become Mr. René Berteaux's pre-

cious second in command, and they would, in fact, between the two of them, carry the whole weight of the administration, even when Fr. Merklen succeeded Fr. Seraphin at the beginning of the war. René Berteaux had grown up in the House and was one with it. He devoted himself to his responsibilities with a devotion that can be said to be heroic, without ever giving himself a day of rest. He had to endure the horrors of the war, the occupation of the house in Paris, the flight to Bordeaux and Limoges, and then to restart the company, which had been badly shaken and, moreover, very badly mauled by the Liberators, who surely had not shown any more resistance than the staff of the Bonne Presse. Two large volumes of documents can attest to this. This did not prevent that one day after the war, our brave Michelin was threatened by the Public Prosecutor of I don't know which court, to be simply shot, while in the hot seat,

he attested to the magnificent conduct of his entire staff. Fr. Merklen, the great spokesman of La Croix to the Catholic world, passing from bishops to simple priests and men of work scattered in all sectors of Catholic action, had given the newspaper an importance that its successor, Fr. Gabel<sup>3</sup>, would further emphasize in a remarkable way. Exhausted in his turn, Fr. Merklen was to disappear in 1949, after a great jubilee of small apotheosis.

### Restrictions and groans

Even before the war, the decline in subscribers had required measures that provoked much moaning in the editorial offices.

In the 1936 balance sheet, there had been a drop of 1,200,000 F. Paper and salaries rose while subscriptions fell. The Board of Directors, “determined to strengthen its authority in the face of certain independences, even ecclesiastical ones,” demanded vigorous cuts, especially at Le Noël, and in the many magazines of Fr. Chardavoine, adding to them the costly *Annuario Pontificio*, which was then saved by the intervention of Cardinal Pacelli. It was decided to suppress La Croix des Jeunes, threatening *À la page* and other publications.

Fr. Point made a long plea for Le Noël, and Fr. Cornillie<sup>4</sup> for La Croix des Jeunes, while Fr. Victorien pleaded for *À la page*. Emotions were all the more lively because at the same time, the administration was launching at great expense a new magazine, *Belle jeunesse*, which was doomed to failure. Big mistake. At the same time, they asked to change the Director of La Documentation Catholique. Fr. Moulin<sup>5</sup>, who succeeded Fr. Calixte, died almost immediately, and a

new replacement had to be found. It is understandable that there were painful upheavals in the house... And it was then that the second war broke out, after the Munich farce.

### War, Occupation and Restart

La Croix and Le Pèlerin (which became Le Foyer) first took refuge in Bordeaux, then continued to Limoges in a privileged zone, while in Paris, the house sequestered by the Germans was officially entrusted to the care of Fr. Ferdinand<sup>6</sup>, after a certain amount of looting, especially of the iconography. This did not prevent an intellectual officer from breaking the seals affixed to the library at will and personally pillaging it in front of the frightened eyes of Fr. Fabien<sup>7</sup>, posted on a terrace.

At the Liberation, the House was once again placed under a very malicious sequestration, but it had great difficulty in getting up and running again, and very slowly. The first thing to be done was to draw a few issues from a *Documentation Catholique ‘sui generis’*. However, La Croix and Le Pèlerin could only be started rather late. They were condemned in principle by a really odious decree, taken in advance in Algiers. The MRP [Mouvement Républicain Populaire, a very influential Christian Democrat party in France after the war] helped them to reappear, by making a parallel concession to a communist newspaper. The communists, “the sons of the shot”, sons who were less numerous than those of the others, had from then on become the greatest of the patriots, and this note, for them brand new, was going to serve everywhere for their diabolical propaganda.

1) **Fr. Éphrem (Jacques Marie) Jubert** (1898-1987). In the fall of 1932, Fr. Éphrem enters La Bonne Presse. For 20 years, first with Father Ambroise Jacquot, then with Father Séraphin Protin, he collaborated in the direction of the administrative services, but he was especially in charge of the women’s services of the company, supervised by the Oblate Sisters, who still numbered more than forty. He also assists Fr. Point in Le Noël movement.

2) **Mr. Alfred Michelin** (1883-1975) Joined La Croix as a religious information journalist before becoming Director General of La Bonne Presse in 1935. He is a figure of social Catholicism and Christian trade unionism. Friend of Hubert Beuve-Méry, founder and director of the newspaper Le Monde, both are tertiary employees of Saint-Dominique. Alfred Michelin had a very difficult period to deal with: the 1939-45 war, with the exodus of La Croix from Limoges, the German occupation in Paris, the difficulties to be faced for the reappearance of La Croix after the Liberation, under the same title, the restarting of the company.

3) **Fr. Gunfrid (Émile) Gabel** (1908-1968) Professor of theology at the Lormoy scholasticate from 1934 to 1943. In 1944 he joined La Bonne Presse, to take care of publishing, and already collaborated with La Croix. On the death of Fr. Merklen in 1949, he became its Editor-in-Chief. He renewed it and gave it his mark. But in 1957, because of health problems, and especially because of internal problems within the editorial staff, he was dismissed by Fr. W. Dufault, “in the name of holy obedience”.

4) **Fr. Marie-Michel (Gustave) Cornillie** (1896-1981) While serving as Federal Chaplain of the Paris-North YCW from 1931 to 1938, he was for three years Director of La Croix des Jeunes.



5) **Fr. Georges-Michel (Georges Eugène) Moulin** (1893-1939). He has been a priest in the diocese of Sées since 1917, when he entered the Assumption in 1927. In 1937, he was named Director of La Documentation Catholique, a job that suited his aptitudes and intellectual tastes. Unfortunately, he died in 1939, at the age of forty-five, without having been able to give his full measure in this press work where he had just arrived.

6) **Fr. Ferdinand (Joseph Marie Alexandre) Guilbaut** (1880-1962). It was in 1919 that he joined La Bonne Presse where he remained until his death. He was editor at Le Noël and in charge of publicity (it was then called propaganda.) He was also the community bursar and director of the work of the orphans of the sea. During the war of 1939-45, he was the keeper of the premises throughout the German occupation. And he fought foot to foot against the occupier's claims.

7) **Fr. Fabien (Pierre Antoine) Petit** (1883-1954). He was ordained a priest in 1911 and almost immediately professor in Louvain of canon law and moral theology for 16 years. In 1935, he was appointed librarian of La Bonne Presse. During the Occupation, he was sorry to see the Germans take away boxes of books and archives. With his binoculars, across the street, he watched the operation, trying to spot what was being stolen.

Little by little, the House accustomed to the miracle was able to resume a good part of its activities, sticking so far to the main publications, La Croix, Le Pèlerin, La Documentation Catholique. Everyone is putting their good will into it, even those who sometimes have to groan. Mr. René Berteaux, very weakened, continues even from afar to follow everything attentively. The tireless Michelin, despite his increased age, remains his brilliant second, waiting for a new dedication, that of Mr. Monin, to take the helm.

La Bonne Presse remains above all the work of the Good Lord.

## VI. THE PROBLEM OF DUAL AUTHORITY

La Bonne Presse is both a work of apostolate and an especially complex undertaking.

### Work and industry

The work is above all a matter for the religious founders who bear the temporal responsibility for it. But it is not for them to carry on an industry themselves, and even less so a certain trade, two things which are indispensable to the work, but for which they have no competence and which remain outside the activities of their ordinary life. They must, therefore, have recourse to the help of com-



The weekly regional editions of La Croix, displayed at the 1937's Universal Exhibition.



Fr. Emile Gabel, editor-in-chief of *La Croix* from 1949 to 1957 (center), and Alfred Michelin, former director of *La Bonne Presse* (right).

petent and devoted lay people to run the business normally, but they must remain in full agreement with those who retain primary responsibility for it.

### Making a good relationship

In order to carry out such an important case, it is therefore necessary to establish between the two responsible authorities an agreement that is as complete as it is cordial at all times. This is the only way to resolve the problem, which was sometimes crucial, of this delicate and permanent collaboration.

Each of the two authorities knows in advance that there are mutual concessions to be made, sometimes from different points of view; concessions that are indispensable to ensure peace and good work, joy and final success. Pius XI explained to me, at the time of the Conciliation, that he had to come to an agreement practically even with Mussolini,

whose principles he did not accept. This is the law, he said, for all those who must live together and in good company. Now, even among the best and wisest, there is a tendency to see only one side of things and also to impose one's point of view. The others are easily forgotten.

### Totalitarian minds

At the bottom of each one of us there is an instinct of domination that pushes us to keep the first place for ourselves and to claim, there again, the right to command others. This can be good and legitimate, in the soul of true leaders. But there is a strong risk of spoiling everything, even being chiefs, by claiming excessive omnipotence, especially when the chief exercises his authority only by virtue of delegation.

I have heard complaints for thirty years about this need for greater authority, on both the religious and secular sides. I think

of long pages received, either from Fr. Merklen upon his happy arrival at *La Croix* after 1927, or from Mr. Guiraud during his disillusioned retirement in 1936. And there were many others between these two dates. A serious breach of trust was even committed at that time by constantly harassing the Nunciature in order to increase an authority that was, moreover, very useful. And I had to provide explanations to the Secretariat of State, to Bishop Ottaviani. I had to start again more than once with Archbishop Maglione. But in 1929, the measure of indiscretion really overflowed, by making the exclusive charge against two Assistants and then having them removed from Rome, despite the agreement between Father General and Cardinal Lépicié, Prefect of Religious; this was found a little strange in the Sacred Congregation!

How often, moreover, I also had to hear the sometimes dramatic groans of the great Directors, Mr. Féron-Vrau and Mr. Berteaux. All of them bitterly declared that they did not have sufficient authority, and that with this limited authority, their action became impossible. This was sometimes quite ingenuousness for oneself and unjustly severe for others. I would gladly respond to them, using my example, that even a Superior General could never walk alone and without his Council every time he had to deal with a somewhat important matter and that, in fact, things were not getting any worse.

I believe that the most omnipotent and even the most enlightened Satraps are often the least obeyed. *Siamo uomini*, say the Italians. We, too, are men and not very different from those to whom we must command and

especially from those with whom we must share a regularly constituted authority, in order to carry out together a sacred task.

### Two very different regimes

At La Bonne Presse, there were successively two very different regimes imposed by events.

The first was a family regime, in which Fr. Bailly commanded freely, assisted by Fr. Ambrose for the Administration. And both of them submitted eagerly to the superior authority of Fr. Picard. Happy times when everything was going on without the multiple complexities of today.

In the time of Mr. Féron-Vrau and Mr. Berteaux, the religious had to slip away by force and the Civil Director needed all his authority to fully fulfill his prerogatives, both legal and real. Moreover, these great friends never hesitated to recognize themselves near us as authentic delegates, despite sometimes divergent interpretations. Fr. Ambrose was close to them, the sharing of responsibilities was largely maintained, even in all the details of the General Administration - because for the Redactions, which Fr. Ambrose did not look after himself, the authority of the Congregation was never questioned. Ambrose in the Administration, has in fact disappeared for 19 years. In my opinion, it is important to reconstitute it again by common accord and to exercise it very discreetly in all the services, beginning by giving a chaplain to the personnel who remained so faithful to the work.

I believe that this is an essential point for a permanent collaboration, which would restore the

necessary balance, guaranteeing order and peace.

### Easy and indispensable agreement

In La Bonne Presse, there is no totalitarian power. It is therefore easy to get along perfectly between the holders of the dual authority made necessary. The discreet but real presence of a religious at the various centers of command, be it on the Board of Directors or in the Management, can be a precious reinforcement, and this permanent link would be enough to ward off all clashes or to attenuate them greatly. The effective leadership of La Croix especially needs a very wide freedom of action. It is no doubt still necessary to maintain a certain legal prudence for the religious, but it can be greatly mitigated today, because the crime of unauthorized congregation no longer exists at this time.

Between the two authorities, it would seem useless to determine the attributions of each in a too meticulous manner, which could itself easily lend itself to discussion. It seems better for them to live in an atmosphere of broad mutual trust and permanent collaboration.

The real way to live in such an atmosphere of full agreement and to avoid possible conflicts is, we believe, above all, to maintain this habitual and very cordial contact between the various authorities. Fortunately, we have started it. This contact has been missed very annoyingly in the past, due to the force of circumstances, and it was the occasion of regrettable misunderstandings at times. This habitual contact must, moreover,



Fr. Emile Gabel in 1965.

be extended to the last echelon of each authority, asking all the services to work truly all with one heart and in a common effort, for the work of God.

### Full confidence

La Bonne Presse has been maintained to this day, despite the hard times it has had to go through, and sometimes by a tangible miracle.

God is with us and it is good to feel him present, at the moment when the work, having emerged from the shocks of war, must take on a new lease of life.

The staff remains firmly attached to it. It is necessary to effectively extend the salutary action of such a House. A new propaganda has begun. Machines with good circulation were announced. The great leaders have only to encourage everyone, and each one, I am sure, will strive at his or her work station to continue, even today, the grandiose apostolate that its venerable founders dreamed of from the very beginning. Let us be worthy to continue their miracle.

**Christmas 1953**  
**Father Gervais Quenard**  
**(End)**

# The allure of holiness

« The goal of the Christian life, says Father d’Alzon, is union with God. The goal of the religious life, is the most absolute union with God. »

“*The experience of the sanctity of God is always one of a loving presence at the heart of our troubled history*”, writes Dominique Waymel.<sup>1</sup> Fr. d’Alzon’s attraction to the Absolute obviously did not ignore the upheavals of his time. But because they existed at the heart of contrary winds, his most profound spiritual aspirations can enlighten us, in this time of confinement, on this introspection and this Augustinian return to the heart.



**Let everything be penetrated by this intimate feeling that pushes our soul towards him.**

In fact, the spiritual experience of our Founder echoes the radical questions synonymous with our time and helps us to better understand the pertinence that Emmanuel d’Alzon lived in his relation to God: an experience that perhaps carries with it a lesson for this historic turning point brought on by the pandemic of Covid 19, the societal crisis and climate change. Doesn’t d’Alzon invite us to follow him, to revisit our interior space and to find, in our imposed confinement, a return deep inside ourselves, toward an attraction

for the interior presence of God that we so often neglect? Isn’t this one of the signs of holiness?

## Etymology

What do we hear when we speak of attraction? The verb from which it derives in French, “attirer”, is no longer in use: it comes from the Latin *attrahere* (ad-tra-her), “pulled toward yourself”, “to come to yourself” like the magnet attracts iron, and therefore gave the verb “to attract” and nouns like attraction and attractiveness - to designate the quality by which something or

someone pleases and fascinates. In the land of bullfighting, it is worth remembering that it is associated in the games in the arena with the color red.

In Greek it goes back to the verb *elkuw*: to pull, to train, to employ, sometimes in a metaphorical sense: drawn by an interior power, lead, forced. It is derived from the verb *haireomai* which means to take for yourself, to prefer, to choose by election.

## The Biblical attraction

Divine attraction refers to God’s election for his people and his covenant with them for the benefit of all humanity. And the strength of his attraction is his love, as the Song of Songs emphasizes: “Lead me to follow you” (Song 1:4), an experience that the Song of Solomon illustrates with a striking sensuality. In the prophet Hosea, this divine attraction is transformed into a true seduction, like that of an intimate marital relationship: “*Therefore, I want to attract her and lead her to the desert and I will talk to her heart.*” (Hos 2:16) This anthropomorphism continues when the prophet Hosea, abandoning the image of the wife, borrows that of the son whom he recalls from Egypt and for whom he manifests the tenderness of a father with maternal tendencies (Hos 11:4).

The most powerful attraction of God, is his love. It is the first charm that he exerts towards man in order to wrest him from his fascination with the world and to remind him how much God looks, not in a human way that is satisfied with appearances, but with the heart (1 Sam 16:7). In fact, his manner of attraction adheres to another strategy that we find illustrated in Isaiah’s suffering servant: “*He had neither beauty nor splendor to attract our gaze and his appearance had nothing to please.*” (Is 53:2) Or again: “*Like an apple tree among the trees of the forest, such is my good---loving among the young people. In its shadow I desired to sit, and its* ▶

<sup>1</sup> *Une Eglise sainte? Repères pour une période troublée*, de Dominique Waymel (Salvator, 2020, p. 49).

<sup>2</sup> « *O admirable puissance de la croix ! O ineffable gloire de la Passion, dans laquelle le tribunal du Seigneur, et le jugement du monde, et le pouvoir est crucifié. En effet, Seigneur, tu as tiré à toi toutes choses, tu as étendu tes mains tout le jour pour un peuple qui ne croyait pas (Is 65, 2) et même qui s'opposait à toi. Le monde entier a reçu de pouvoir reconnaît ta majesté.* » Saint Léon Le Grand, tr. 59, cité dans *L'Attrait divin. La doctrine de l'opération et le gouvernement des créatures chez Thomas d'Aquin*, d'Etienne Perrier (Parole et Silence, 2019, p. 622).

<sup>3</sup> Réunion du Tiers ordre des hommes du 19 avril 1855.

<sup>4</sup> Méditations sur la perfection religieuse pour les Augustins de l'Assomption. Paris, 1927, II, p. 155.

<sup>5</sup> Ouverture de la retraite aux Religieuses d'Auteuil, septembre 1877.

<sup>6</sup> Retraite du P. d'Alzon aux Religieuses de l'Assomption de Nîmes et de Montpellier du 10 au 18 septembre 1877 dans la 7<sup>e</sup> instruction.

<sup>7</sup> Méditation sur l'humilité, 4<sup>e</sup> jour de la retraite aux Religieuses d'Auteuil, septembre 1877.

<sup>8</sup> Retraite d'Auteuil de septembre 1877, 7<sup>e</sup> journée (2<sup>e</sup> instruction) sur l'attachement à la chaire de saint Pierre.

<sup>9</sup> Lettre à Mère Marie Eugénie du 10 avril 1858, dans *Lettres du Père d'Alzon*, t. II, p. 420.

<sup>10</sup> Retraite d'Auteuil de septembre 1877, 7<sup>e</sup> jour (3<sup>e</sup> instruction) sur l'amour de sa congrégation.

<sup>11</sup> Lettre du Père d'Alzon à Mère Marie Eugénie du 9 octobre 1849, dans *Lettres du Père d'Alzon*, t. C, p. 503.

*fruit is sweet to my taste.*” (Song 2:3) An apple tree in the middle of a forest of firs, cedars and oaks looks like a dwarf, without size or presence. Yet these large trees do not produce edible fruit and have only leaves, symbols of the works of the flesh that pass and are often destroyed by fire, while the apple tree is the only one to bear this sweet, refreshing fruit. Like the apple tree, Jesus had neither beauty, nor splendor to attract our gaze and nonetheless it is of his fruit that we are nourished.

We verify this in both the Gospel of John and the Apostle Paul. In the Johannine discourse, the divine attraction consists in “coming to [God] to have eternal life” (Jn 5:40) and Jesus himself is the gift that leads to the Father (cf. Jn 6:35-40). It is the Father who directs the believer towards the one to whom the fullness of the Father’s life is offered: “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me, does not draw him.” (Jn 12:32). It is therefore in the cross that this attraction is realized.<sup>2</sup>

For Saint Paul, to be drawn to God, was “to search and to aspire to the greatest gifts” (1 Cor 12:31). For us to be introduced to his hymn of love, one must, he said, “aspire to the gifts of the Spirit” (1 Cor 14:1) for the good and edification of the community (1 Cor 14:12), an aspiration that requires a concern for unity and a humble attitude: “Do not have a taste for grandeur; but let yourself be drawn by that which is humble.” (Rom 12:16)

### Fr. d'Alzon and the divine attraction

For Fr. d'Alzon, the allure of holiness was served by a major quality: a solid temperament

rooted in a staunch faith and a faultless attachment toward morality. With a character that was loyal, honest, courageous and generous, he detested duplicity, weakness and egoism. For him, God responds to an attraction communicated by grace.<sup>3</sup> “*The goal of the Christian life, he said, is union with God. The goal of the religious life, is the most absolute union with God.*”<sup>4</sup>

We also find in d'Alzon the notion of “*particular attraction*” when speaking about the charism of people, secret freedoms and personal freedoms that should align one’s thought with “*the great attraction of the Congregation*”. “*We say: the charism of the Assumption, the grace of foundation received in the Church and for the Church*” translated Fr. Pierre Touveneraud. Fr. d'Alzon acknowledged that “*there are few religious families where we find (as in the Assumption) so much openness to allow individuals to follow the spiritual attractions that God has given them: “We respect you like Jesus Christ respects your souls. Because of this broadmindedness, this generosity, he added during a retreat for religious, may you be all the more generous in sacrificing what should be sacrificed; may your sacrifices somehow equal this broadmindedness of the congregation to which you belong.” It is therefore based on the union of minds and hearts that his concern is inscribed, “in the sole attraction of obeying and pleasing Jesus Christ.*”<sup>5</sup>

“*This spirit of unity is yours, he said again, stay faithful, attach yourself to it as if it were a supreme good. God blesses, God loves this spirit, it is the strength of the Catholic Church, it has*





“My God, it is you who attracted me, it is you that I am looking for, pull me after you.” (E. d’Alzon)

been your strength up to this point.”<sup>6</sup>

This divine attraction can only be the product of humility and of purity of soul: “This soul wants nothing of the glory that passes, that seeks nothing for itself, and that desires God and only God. God rushes to her with all the ardor and power of his love. She is His entirely, pure and chaste. He is the King and the Master of this soul, he completes her, he establishes her residence. And if St. Augustine could say: Hu-

*milis caelum Deo, humility is the heaven of God, it is because the humble soul is the exclusive resting place of the glory of God. It is there that the reign of the love of God develops in us.*”<sup>7</sup>

This divine attraction is guided by the quest for truth, an attraction that can only be maintained but through adoration. “Guard this light, follow this divine attraction, live a true culture of adoration toward the sovereign truth that has been manifested to you, and that which you follow and enlightens you in the

midst of all the actions of your day without which the occupations and distractions of the outside works never let you escape from the divine clarity received through contemplation.”<sup>8</sup> This particular impetus is carried by the spirit of the congregation, whose essential purpose is to go to Jesus “to bring oneself to union with Our Lord.”<sup>9</sup> “My God, it is you who drew me, it is you that I seek, draw me to yourself to this divine scent, to this perfume that is the distinctive character of the holy family which I have entered. May these divine perfumes train me and intoxicate me, may they sustain me on the way, so that having lived here with this religious family in a complete union, and I may live again with her in the bosom of your eternity.”<sup>10</sup> This attraction becomes a force for the beyond.<sup>11</sup>

The divine attraction, fruit of humility, is explained in the Directory in the fourth chapter on the spirit of Our Lord: “To love Jesus Christ, one must know him and to know him, one must study his perfections.”<sup>12</sup> Particularly in the study of his mysteries: “the Incarnation, the birth, the hidden life, the preaching, the suffering, the annihilation, death and resurrection.”<sup>13</sup> He implored Mother Marie Eugénie to get as close to it as possible.<sup>14</sup> He encouraged the frequent reception of the sacraments, particularly penance, as well as Eucharistic Adoration<sup>15</sup>, and he stressed the importance of study: “To be a true religious of the Assumption, one must study seriously.”<sup>16</sup> This attraction also brings him to action for the sanctification of souls.<sup>17</sup>

“We don’t catch flies with vinegar”, states an old expression to illustrate that we win someone ▶

<sup>12</sup> *Ecrits spirituels*, p. 28.

<sup>13</sup> *Ecrits spirituels*, p. 29-30.

<sup>14</sup> Lettre du Père d'Alzon à Mère Marie Eugénie du 25 janvier 1849, dans *Lettres du Père d'Alzon*, t. C, p. 411.

<sup>15</sup> 7<sup>e</sup> circulaire, *Ecrits spirituels*, p. 248-249.

<sup>16</sup> 33<sup>e</sup> méditation sur les études, *Ecrits spirituels*, p. 585 s.17

<sup>17</sup> Lettre à Mère Marie Eugénie du 15 avril 1852, dans *Lettres du Père d'Alzon*, t. I, p. 154.

<sup>18</sup> Lettre à Mère Marie Eugénie du 27 février 1847, § 2, dans *Lettres du Père d'Alzon*, t. C, p. 213-214

<sup>19</sup> Lettre à Mlle Amélie de Péli-sier du 19 septembre 1852, dans *Lettres du Père d'Alzon*, t. I, p. 197.

<sup>20</sup> Lettre à Mère Marie Corren-son du 27 janvier 1869, dans *Lettres du Père d'Alzon*, t. VII, p. 234.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. les lettres à Mère Marie Correnson du 13 février 1869, du 30 avril 1869, du 19 et du 20 juillet, du 27 septembre, du 20 décembre 1869, du 10 janvier et du 1<sup>er</sup> février 1870 ; à Mère Marie Eugénie du 17 janvier 1850, du 11 février 1850, du 24 novembre 1852, du 1<sup>er</sup> janvier 1860.

<sup>22</sup> *Méditations sur la perfection religieuse pour les Augustins de l'Assomption*. Paris, 1927, II, p. 157-158.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Lettre N° 4 du P. Benoît Grière sur l'intériorité, Rome 2015.

over more easily with gentleness rather than force. Herein lies the secret of the attraction of Jesus to his Father. It is a driving force, as the Gospel expresses it in an irresistible way. Like many saints before him, collaborators of God, Fr. d'Alzon understood this and measured its full scope. Very early, he wanted to share this insight with the vast network of his friends with whom he carried on a diligent correspondence. Having become a priest, this conviction stayed with him more and more and overpowered him: *That everyone becomes penetrated by this intimate feeling that pushes our souls toward him.*<sup>18</sup> This attraction is strongly felt. This attraction can sometimes be destabilizing, it then calls for a greater abandonment.<sup>19</sup>

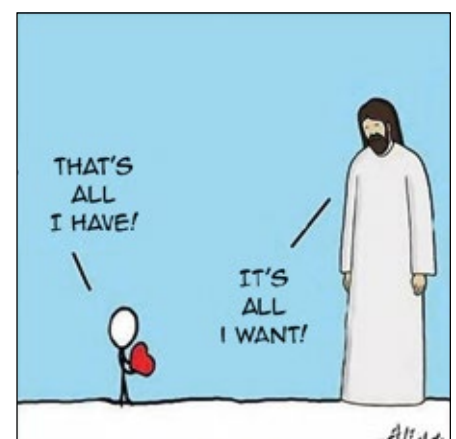
His approach resembles that of Augustine: *"You made us for yourself, Lord, and our hearts can't rest until they rest in you."* (Saint Augustin, *Confessions*, I, I) His infinite desire is made for an infinite love. What Fr. d'Alzon puts into practice, as pastor, is first of all his preaching and spiritual direction. By preaching, he intends to instruct by presenting the truth in an interesting light, to convince and persuade, in a word to convert and finally to sanctify, that is, to lead to a higher world. Occasionally, he did become discouraged: "I would like to become a saint, but I do nothing; except to preach, which is nothing, one must act."<sup>20</sup> By his spiritual direction, he intends to guide in his wake on the ways of God's love. He wants to make saints out of those he leads: *"Do not refuse anything for the love of Jesus Christ who presses you to become a saint."*<sup>21</sup>

In the admirable meditation, already mentioned, on the theme of religious perfection, after cit-

ing the psalm: *"My happiness, is to be near God"* (Ps. 73:28) and the prophet Jeremiah: *"I love you with an everlasting love, also, I draw you to me through friendship"* (Jer 31:3), he writes: *"The greatest praise that the angels can give to God is to recognize that he is holy, that is, that he has an abundance of all the perfections. . . What he is, God wants me to become (1Thess 4:3). I am not a saint; but, with God's grace, I can become one."*<sup>22</sup>

Such is the divine attraction that burned in Fr. d'Alzon to embrace the heart. It consists in "expanding" his thoughts and sentiments in a supernatural way and to expand his love of Jesus Christ, according to the language of the time and in reference to the mystical experiences of the great saints. Such is the framework on which our spiritual tradition is built. We would be wrong, in this time of confinement, not to be inspired to follow this royal road, which is divided into three stages: study, love and imitation of Jesus Christ.<sup>23</sup>

**P. Bernard LE LÉANNEC**  
Postulateur général



# Two Congolese Assumptionists publish their reflections on the tragedy in the Béni region

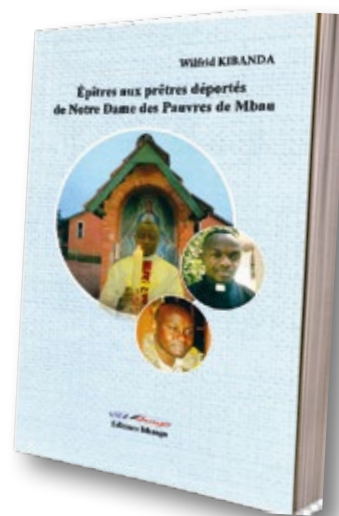
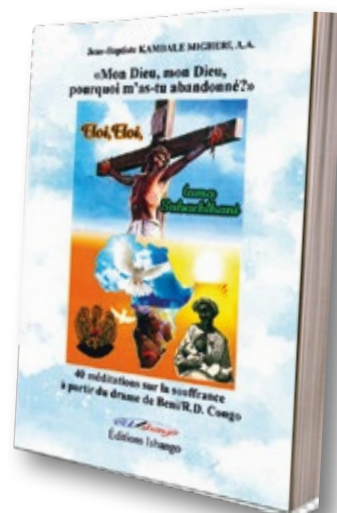
The passage of time does not erase history. Today, seven years still unite us to the event of October 19, 2012, more than they separate us from it. The story of the disappearance of the Assumptionist religious Anselme, Jean-Pierre and Edmond is still fresh in the memory of the people of Kivu, long victims of the insecurity in the East of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Many speak of it, in the media as well as in the sharing around a fire in the village. However, the truth about their deportation is still veiled.

*Les Epîtres aux prêtres déposés de Notre Dame des Pauvres de Mbau*, published by Fr. Wilfrid Kibanda (1), are part of the awakening of consciences asleep in the under-information - if not disinformation - behind which hides the oppressor who still wears masks. It is not, however, to this oppressor that our confrere, who is also the rector of the University of the Assumption in the Congo (UAC), is addressing himself: his epistolary dialogue goes rather to his missing confreres. For, in a context where freedom of expression is shaken by the "hurricane of migratory birds," is it not worth writing a letter to the missing - without waiting for a response in return - just to accuse and denounce the oppressor? This context makes it possible to address the victim rather than the oppressor. Thus Fr. Wilfrid Kibanda presents "the reasons for their deportation, the vain efforts made and the risks involved in finding them without forgetting their current legal status.

In the same perspective of the drama of Béni in DR-Congo, in the same editions, Fr. Jean-Baptiste Kambale Migheri offers 40 spiritual meditations on suffering. The title of his book, *«Mon Dieu, mon Dieu, pourquoi m'as-tu abandonné?»* (2) translates the cry of Jesus Christ on the cross, a cry that also resounds in the city of Béni, long a victim of the massacres. Is not the suffering of Christ on the cross the place where the meaning of man's suffering is revealed? Or rather, did Christ not take up on his cross the cry of all the persecuted and oppressed of the earth?

These two works by Congolese Assumptionists recall the role of the workers of the Kingdom in an Africa in crisis, in the midst of a wounded people. They insist on justice, peace and reconciliation, which today must be at the heart of pastoral care in the diocese of Butembo-Béni. If, according to Vatican II, the Church is called to share the hopes and anxieties, the joys and the sorrows of the human race, then "it is with frustrated, disenfranchised and silenced men that the Church must become one body, if she is truly the body of the Crucified One on Golgotha" (Jean-Marc Ela).(3)

Fr. Alexis VALYAMUGHENI



<sup>1</sup> Éditions Ishango (Butembo), 60 p.

<sup>2</sup> Éditions Ishango (Butembo), 150 p.

<sup>3</sup> In *Ma foi d'Africain* (Karthala, 1980), p. 190.

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## 2 OFFICIAL

- ◆ Agenda
- ◆ A prayer of Fr. d'Alzon on vocation

## 3 EDITORIAL

- ◆ Christmas 2020... Giving Thanks for the 175th Anniversary of the Foundation of the Augustinians of the Assumption

## 4 ◆ Calls, Nominations, Changes...

## 5 JUBILEE

- ◆ Fr. Benoît Grière: "We are passionate about the Kingdom!"
- ◆ Unexpected Faces of Fr. d'Alzon.
- ◆ Closing of the Jubilee at Notre-Dame des Victoires
- ◆ The 2021 Solidarity Campaign

## 11 FONDATIONS

- ◆ Assumption, always a Founder
- ◆ Madagascar is going to found in Port-Bergé

## 13 NEWS

- ◆ A New Chapel for the Novitiate of Ba Ria

## 14 ARCHIVES

- ◆ In the Footsteps of the Assumptionist Habit

## 16 TESTIMONY

- ◆ "I won't forget this Land and those who continue to live here".

## 18 ARCHIVE LINES

- ◆ The Miracle of La Bonne Presse (Part 4)

## 23 POSTULATION

- ◆ The allure of holiness

## 27 BOOKS...

## 28 OUR DECEASED BROTHERS

# Our Deceased Brothers

† **Father Arthur HERVET**, of the community of Lille (Province of Europe), died on November 23, 2020 in Lille (France). His funeral was celebrated on November 26th in the church of Saint-Martin d'Esquermes, followed by burial in the Montparnasse cemetery in Paris. He was 82 years old.



"Why, Lord, at death's door, do I have so much confidence in You? How can I be afraid at the idea of finding those I loved, at the idea of feeling liberated from the shackles of the physical world, from those of the body, at the idea of discovering lightness, beauty, truth... of feeling the so gentle, so beneficial warmth of God's Love? Lord, I count on your goodness. You know everything about my life. You give coherence to all the events, all the encounters that have been added together, put together like paragraphs written without transition. ...] You know the figure of the puzzle that You have built for me throughout these years. [...]

Lord, at the time of the Ultimate Judgment, if there is only one place left and another one of your sheep that I need to warm myself to the sweetness of your Tenderness, I prefer that you give it to him/ her; I will be able to wait, wherever You wish."

*Excerpts from the book by Fr. Arthur Hervet, La péniche du Bon Dieu (Presses de la Renaissance, 2007)*

